

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2855

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TBIO, AR
SUBJECT: TWELVTH INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONGRESS

SUMMARY: OFFICIALS OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST CANCER AND THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY ON A VISIT TO BUENOS AIRES THIS WEEK INDICATED THAT THEIR ORGANIZATIONS FULLY SUPPORTED THE CANCER CONGRESS AND WERE HOPEFUL THAT US SCIENTISTS WOULD NOT BOYCOTT THE CONGRESS AND THE FULL DELEGATION OF OVER 500 WOULD ATTEND THE CONGRESS. AMERICAN CANCER OFFICIALS ARE FULLY AWARE OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND DEPLORE OPPRESSION OF SCIENTIFIC FREEDOM BUT FEEL SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE AND ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE IN CANCER RESEARCH ARE THE PARAMOUNT ISSUES. THEY FEEL A SUCCESSFUL CANCER CONGRESS IN ARGENTINA WILL IMPROVE THE RIGHTS OF SCIENTISTS RATHER THAN HINDER THEM. ARGENTINE CANCER OFFICIALS ARE HOPEFUL OF US EMBASSY SUPPORT AND WILL VISIT US AND SEVERAL WESTERN EUROPE COUNTRIES IN NEXT FEW WEEKS TO PROMOTE CONGRESS AND DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES.
END SUMMARY

1. DR. GERALD P. MURPHY, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST CANCER AND DR. FRANK RAUSCHER, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY, VISITED BUENOS AIRES FOR THREE DAYS THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS THE ARRANGEMENTS
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FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONGRESS WITH MEMBERS OF THE ARGENTINE CONGRESS SECRETARIAT. THE AMERICAN AND ARGENTINE CANCER OFFICIALS VISITED SCIENCE COUNSELOR IN THE EMBASSY TO DISCUSS THE ARRANGEMENTS BEING MADE AND TO SEEK THE SUPPORT OF THE EMBASSY FOR THE CONGRESS. THE CONGRESS HAS RECEIVED 4,600 REGISTRATIONS SO FAR, 1,600 FROM 72 OTHER COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST NUMBER FROM THE U.S. OF OVER 500.

DR. RAUSCHER SAID THAT SOME US MEMBERS HAVE INDICATED IN THE PAST THAT THEY MAY BOYCOTT THE MEETING BECAUSE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, BUT HE NOW FEELS MOST WILL EVENTUALLY COME BECAUSE THEY HAVE A DEEP INTEREST IN CANCER RESEARCH THAT OVERSHADOWS THE POLITICAL ISSUES. BOTH DR. RAUSCHER AND DR. MURPHY MENTIONED THAT HOPEFULLY THIS CONGRESS, AS OTHER CANCER CONGRESSES IN THE PAST, WILL BE DEVOTED STRICTLY TO SCIENTIFIC ISSUES AND THAT POLITICS AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WOULD NOT BECOME A SERIOUS ISSUE OF DISCUSSION.

2. DR. SALOMAN BARG, THE ARGENTINE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CANCER CONGRESS, INDICATED THAT HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WOULD GIVE ITS FULL SUPPORT TO THE CONGRESS, POINTING OUT THAT THE AMERICAN DELEGATION WILL BE THE LARGEST TO ATTEND. DR. BARG INDICATED HE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO MEET WITH AMBASSADOR CASTRO WITHIN THE NEXT TWO OR THREE WEEKS TO DISCUSS THE CONGRESS. SCIENCE COUNSELOR INDICATED TO THE GROUP THAT CERTAINLY, FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, THE EMBASSY WAS IN SUPPORT OF THE CONGRESS; HOWEVER, THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM REMAINS A SERIOUS ISSUE AND IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT CERTAIN US SCIENTISTS ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR COLLEAGUES IN ARGENTINA AND INDEED ANY PLACE ELSE WHERE THERE IS OPPRESSION OF SCIENTIFIC FREEDOM.

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3. DR. CHRISTIAN ANFINSEN'S VISIT TO ARGENTINA WAS DISCUSSED AND DR. RAUSCHER MENTIONED THAT ANFINSEN AND PERRY ARE NOW ENCOURAGING THEIR COLLEAGUES TO ATTEND THE CONGRESS TO PROMOTE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF CANCER RESEARCH.

4. BARG SAID THAT THE CONGRESS SECRETARIAT HAD RECEIVED ONLY FOUR OR FIVE LETTERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD COMPLAINING ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM IN ARGENTINA. BARG INDICATED THEY WERE NOT OBLIVIOUS TO THE PROBLEM THAT A NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS HAD DISAPPEARED OR ARE IN JAIL; IN FACT, DR. WEINSTEIN, THE HEMATOLOGIST WHO WAS RECENTLY KIDNAPPED AND LATER RETURNED, WORKS IN HIS LABORATORY. AND, CERTAINLY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, PARTICULARLY THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY, HAVE VOICED THEIR OBJECTIONS. THEY DO FEEL, THOUGH, THAT MUCH OF THE ADVERSE PRESS TREATMENT AGAINST ARGENTINA, PARTICULARLY IN EUROPE, RELATING THAT NO ONE IS SAFE ON THE STREETS OF BUENOS AIRES IS RIDICULOUS AND IS A CONCENTRATED CAMPAIGN TO EMBARRASS THE GOA AND DISRUPT THE CONGRESS. BARG MENTIONED THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS COMMITTEE WILL VISIT THE US AND EUROPE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS TO MEET WITH MANY OF THEIR COLLEAGUES TO

PROMOTE SUPPORT FOR THE CONGRESS.

5. COMMENTS: LATER IN THE DAY, THE SCIENCE COUNSELOR HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH DOCTORS RAUSCHER AND MURPHY TO EXPLAIN THE LOCAL SITUATION IN DETAIL AND THE ANFINSEN VISIT. BOTH REALIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND THAT PEOPLE WITH IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WITH THE GOA ARE STILL DISAPPEARING. HOWEVER, THEY NOTED THAT BOTH THE INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST CANCER AND THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY COMPLETELY SUPPORT THE CONGRESS BECAUSE IT IS FELT THAT SCIENCE IS INTERNATIONAL AND TRANSCENDS MAN-MADE BORDERS AND SHOULD NOT BE LINKED WITH POLITICS. THEY FEEL A SUCCESSFUL CONGRESS IN ARGENTINA WILL HOPEFULLY IMPROVE THE RIGHTS OF SCIENTISTS WORLDWIDE RATHER THAN HINDER
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6. DR. RAUSCHER GAVE A LECTURE THE NEXT DAY AT THE ARGENTINE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE ON THE ADVANCES IN CANCER RESEARCH AND MENTIONED AT THE END OF THE LECTURE THE SENSITIVITY INVOLVED IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS. HOWEVER, HE HOPED THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE WOULD PREVAIL.
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